

God's Plan Revealed

Bible Background • GENESIS 43; 45:1-15
Printed Text • GENESIS 45:1-15 | Devotional Reading • JOHN 14:1-14

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will UNDERSTAND how Joseph viewed his past mistreatment at the hand of his brothers, RECOGNIZE how God is at work in difficult circumstances, and RESPOND to mistreatment not with vengeance but with creative, transforming initiatives.

In Focus

As Melvin sat at his mother's funeral, he couldn't believe she was gone. He deliberately did not sit on the front row with the rest of the family. Many of his relatives were treating him like an outsider—like he had no right to mourn. He hadn't come to visit after learning the cancer had spread. He didn't want his mother's last memory of him to be as a drug addict. Other relatives and friends had long abandoned him. Mama had known for years that he abused drugs, but she always held out hope. "Son, I'm praying for you," she would say. "And I know the Lord can hear me." Melvin felt he had let his mother down for not getting clean before she passed. Melvin began to cry. Never before had he felt so afraid, alone, and unloved. Then, he felt a firm hand on his shoulder. He looked up and saw his younger sister. "Big brother, I've missed you. I'm so glad you came," she whispered. Finally, Melvin looked over his left shoulder. It was the first time he had ever seen his father cry. "Welcome home, son. Welcome home." The love he felt from his family made Melvin determined to get help immediately.

What is the greatest act of forgiveness you've witnessed? Was all animosity truly forgiven?

Keep in Mind

"Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life" (Genesis 45:5, KJV).

Say It Correctly

Goshen. **GOH**-shun

Manasseh. muh-**NAH**-suh

Zaphnath-paaneah. Zaph-nath-**PA**-ane-ah (Joseph's Egyptian name)

KJV

Genesis 45:1 Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

2 And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.

3 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.

4 And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.

5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

6 For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.

7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

8 So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

9 Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not:

10 And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast:

11 And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.

12 And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you.

13 And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.

14 And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck.

15 Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

NLT

Genesis 45:1 Joseph could stand it no longer. There were many people in the room, and he said to his attendants, "Out, all of you!" So he was alone with his brothers when he told them who he was.

2 Then he broke down and wept. He wept so loudly the Egyptians could hear him, and word of it quickly carried to Pharaoh's palace.

3 "I am Joseph!" he said to his brothers. "Is my father still alive?" But his brothers were speechless! They were stunned to realize that Joseph was standing there in front of them.

4 "Please, come closer," he said to them. So they came closer. And he said again, "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt.

5 But don't be upset, and don't be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives.

6 This famine that has ravaged the land for two years will last five more years, and there will be neither plowing nor harvesting.

7 God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors.

8 So it was God who sent me here, not you! And he is the one who made me an adviser to Pharaoh—the manager of his entire palace and the governor of all Egypt.

9 Now hurry back to my father and tell him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me master over all the land of Egypt. So come down to me immediately!

10 You can live in the region of Goshen, where you can be near me with all your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and everything you own.

11 I will take care of you there, for there are still five years of famine ahead of us. Otherwise you, your household, and all your animals will starve.”

12 Then Joseph added, “Look! You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that I really am Joseph!

13 Go tell my father of my honored position here in Egypt. Describe for him everything you have seen, and then bring my father here quickly.”

14 Weeping with joy, he embraced Benjamin, and Benjamin did the same.

15 Then Joseph kissed each of his brothers and wept over them, and after that they began talking freely with him.

The People, Places, and Times

Joseph. Of Israel’s twelve sons, Joseph was his favorite. He was Israel’s eleventh son and the first son of his favored wife, Rachel. This designation by his father and Joseph’s God-given ability to prophesy caused Joseph’s older brothers to hate him. Eventually, Joseph became a vizier, an officer second only to Pharaoh.

Goshen. A fertile river valley in the delta region of Lower Egypt where Israel and his family would live under Joseph’s watchful eye. Goshen was fertile because of its proximity to the Nile River and excellent pasturage for herds.

Background

Joseph was a man who honored God in every situation whether it was suffering or success; he honored the one true and living God. Potiphar’s wife tried to tempt him, but because Joseph wanted to honor his Master, he would not yield (Genesis 39:9). Although God had given him the ability to interpret dreams, Joseph always gave God the credit for being able to do so (Genesis 40:8). Even when he was before Pharaoh, he honored God. When asked to interpret Pharaoh’s dream, Joseph boldly told Pharaoh there would be a specific number of years of plenty and famine would surely follow (Genesis 41:14–36). When Joseph named his son, Manasseh (which means “to forget”), he was stating that God helped him to forget his sorrow. In today’s lesson, Joseph tells his brothers who he is and acknowledges that God is responsible for him being in Egypt. Later after Israel dies, Joseph will reassure his brothers that God had ordered his steps, and God did it for the good of all (Genesis 50:15–21).

In what area of your life do you need to give more honor to God?

At-A-Glance

1. Joseph Makes Himself Known (Genesis 45:1–8)
2. A Family Reunited (vv. 9–15)

In Depth

1. Joseph Makes Himself Known (Genesis 45:1–8)

After having held back his emotions as best he could for quite a while, Joseph tells his brothers who he really is. His brothers had known him by his Egyptian name, Zaphnath-paaneah, but now he boldly states, “I am Joseph” (v. 3). The brothers are afraid and stand in disbelief or amazement, unable to move or speak. Joseph sees their concern and tries to ease their minds. He calls out to them, beckoning them closer and assuring them they have no reason to fear. Joseph assures them of God’s sovereignty. He understands that whatever they tried to do for evil, God meant for good and a lot of good came out of it. He does not want them to grieve or be angry with themselves for selling him (v. 5). Instead of having a vindictive attitude toward them, he gives recognition to God. God had a perfect plan in mind and was using the brothers’ sinful acts to preserve a remnant of His chosen people. Joseph’s statements are not meant to make light of sin or sinners, but rather to illuminate how God does things (vv. 7-8). This was not to give an excuse for sinning, but rather to appreciate and celebrate the almighty power of God in those things we could refer to as “misfortune.” God is in divine control.

What can we do to remember, like Joseph, that God is in control even when situations seem evil or chaotic?

2. A Family Reunited (vv. 9–15)

Again, in an effort to make his brothers feel more confident and secure, Joseph promises to take care of his father and all his family during the next years of the famine. He urges his brothers to hurry back to Canaan to get this news to their father Israel and let him know about Joseph’s authority in Egypt. Joseph has enough power to help them all. “I will nourish thee,” promises Joseph (v. 11). He is delighted to be in the position to help his father and his family. He is excited for his father to know where God has placed him and eager to relieve his father of the stress of the famine. Joseph’s reunion with Benjamin is especially emotional, since Benjamin is his only full brother and since Joseph had missed Benjamin’s childhood when his other brothers sold him into slavery. They hugged and began to weep on each other’s necks (v. 14). Then Joseph hugs and weeps with all of them, and everyone “talked freely” (v. 15). Joseph’s words and actions make his brothers realize that he was not holding a grudge and was genuinely affectionate toward them. Knowing what God has done for all of them and would do in the future; Joseph is compassionate toward the brothers who had hurt him so much. He does not let past experiences with his brothers defeat the purpose of all that the Lord allowed him to go through. Instead, Joseph is warm toward them, and they are able to reciprocate these feelings. Joseph’s reunion with his family was emotional and tearful.

How does your family deal with strong emotions?

Search the Scriptures

1. Why did Joseph send everyone outside the room except his brothers? (Genesis 45:1)
2. How did the brothers react when Joseph revealed his identity? (vv. 1-4)
3. Why did God send Joseph to Egypt ahead of his brothers (v. 5)?

Discuss the Meaning

Satan's plan was to use Pontius Pilate, Judas Iscariot, the mob in the streets, and the cruel Roman soldiers to end the plan God had for Jesus Christ. How did these men's actions fulfill God's divine plan of salvation for humankind through His only Son, Jesus Christ? Compare and contrast this example from the New Testament with the actions of Joseph's brothers, before and after they encountered him in Egypt.

Liberating Lesson

Philippians 4:11 tells us that in whatever state we find ourselves, we must be content. In other words, we must accept that the situation will be resolved because God is there and worthy of our praise. He has a plan and a purpose in everything He allows us to go through. Whether we understand His plan or not, we must never forget that God is all we need. The tragedy is happening all around us. Too many youths are dying and injured due to gangs, gun violence, substance abuse, bullying, and even suicide. Our first instinct is to ask why. While we must be active in our communities to help recognize and combat these issues, we must also realize that God is helping us and speaking even in the midst of these circumstances. It may appear as though the enemy is having his way, but we can be assured that God's plan is being fulfilled for His perfect purpose.

Application for Activation

Joseph's brothers didn't know what to expect after finding out who Joseph was, the position he held, and remembering what they had done to him. Joseph relieved them of their worries by embracing them. As we interact with our families, our brothers and sisters in Christ as well as other people, let us adopt Joseph's attitude, especially with family members. Let us remember to be kind to others always. Our ability to respond to situations as victors, rather than victims, depends on our ability to recognize the hand of God in every situation. We can do this as we incorporate prayer, Bible study and other spiritual disciplines in our lives. This week set aside time each day to spend with God. Thank God for the challenging times you have faced and allowed Him to use you for His glory.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

During Trouble, Maintain Hope in God
(Psalm 43)

TUESDAY

Benjamin Sent to Joseph with Gifts
(Genesis 43:1-15)

WEDNESDAY

Stolen Cup Found in Benjamin's Grain
(Genesis 44:1-13)

THURSDAY

Brothers Offer to
Become Slaves to Joseph
(Genesis 44:14-17)

FRIDAY

Judah Pleads with Joseph for Benjamin
(Genesis 44:18-26)

SATURDAY

Jacob Will Die Without Seeing Benjamin
(Genesis 44:27-34)

SUNDAY

Joseph and His Brothers
Reconcile Their Differences
(Genesis 45:1-15)